# HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

# KILLSWITCH ENGAGE

April 2013 • *Issue Number 165*
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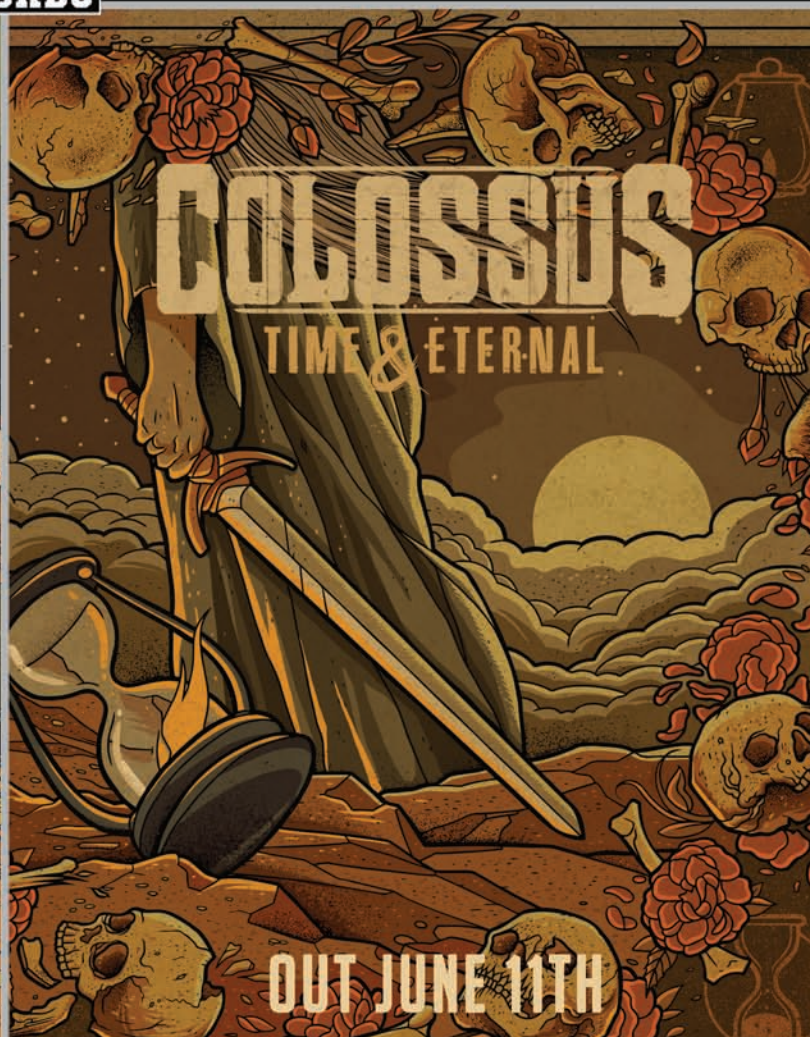

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# From the ceo

*David Stagg*

## WHERE CHANGE BUILDS HOPE

I had the privilege of meeting Doug Van Pelt almost a decade ago in the summer of 2004. I applied to be an intern at HM and Doug was the one who hired me. We worked out of a double-wide outside of Austin and, alongside Doug and then-Managing Editor/Art Director David Allen, I learned to love coffee, to put up with filing subscription cards, and to hate commuting. I also got a glimpse into the day-to-day life of someone who runs a magazine for a living, a place I wanted to be someday. I looked up to Doug The Editor, but if you've never met him, he's an eccentric guy. He's the kind of guy that makes a joke with such deadpan you're not quite sure if he's joking. He'll just stare back at you. You'll laugh uncomfortably and life will go on and you'll hope it was a joke and that you didn't offend him by laughing but maybe you were supposed to laugh. That space where the joke hangs? That's where Doug lives his life. Statements start and end in the same register whether he's mad or happy or grieving. When you get to know him, you'll start to pick up on his passions, and he'll allow himself to show you his emotions. It may just be a guy thing – you know, keep calm and carry on – but for a long time, I wasn't ever quite sure where I stood with him. I assumed I was alright when my internship ended because I asked if I could keep writing for him freelance and he readily agreed. I never would have guessed I made a lifelong friend. Fast forward nine years. I never went into magazines full-time, but I did get into a creative field doing print work and websites, all the while continuing to write for Doug. One day fairly recently I had turned in an album review and his response was two sentences, unpunctuated as usual: "are you interested in buying a magazine."

This isn't a eulogy, but it is a tribute. I don't need to rehash Doug's trials; he's detailed them intimately in these pages. Due to the unfortunate circumstances life dealt him, he had to take a separate full-time job and could no longer run this magazine. Things were so bad, he candidly told me that letting his 28-year-old baby die was a very real possibility. I had started my own business the previous year and the move afforded me the luxury of making my own schedule, and more importantly, the ability to only take on projects I had a passion for. HM was a passion. It was a passion lit by Doug; its ministry the gas for the flame. Hanging around Doug, his fire kept everyone warm. To hear him say he was willing to put it out was devastating, but I've been there and I'm sure you have, too. I've wanted to give up and walk away and quit on any number of things in my life. But in Romans, God clearly states that suffering builds character and through character, we get hope. If I could just be an ounce of hope for Doug as he rebuilds his legacy, I'd be honored. And as we move forward into the next chapter of HM's story, I would be honored if I could do the same for anyone that reads this magazine. HM has given me a life of hope and now I have the unique opportunity to give back. So let's do this together. Let's make these pages a true tribute to the One where hope is born.

## SPINNING AT HM NOW

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| PASSION | *White Flag* | DVP: The song "Jesus, Son of God" has been on my lips. |
| AMY GRANT | *How Mercy Looks...* | DVP: This woman knows pain and grace. |
| KILLSWITCH ENGAGE | *Disarm the Descent* | DS: Great to have Jesse Leach back in the mix. |
| FRANCES CONE | *Come Back* | DS: Incredible voice, abnormal folk music. |
| CITIZEN | *S/T* | DVP: Love the feel, sound and style of this worship. |
| STRYPER | *Second Coming* | DVP: Energetic, live, now versions of classics. |
| KENDRICK LAMAR | *good kid...* | DS: *The Wire* as an album. A hip-hop masterpiece. |

## REGULAR

*Letters* 06
*Heaven's metal fanzine* 31

## FEATURE

*New waters* 8
*Pyrithion* 10
*Killswitch engage* 14

## INTERMISSION

*Columns* 28

## REVIEW

*Music* 25

# Letters to the Edit

## CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Best wishes on this glorious day. I had to smile this morning when I saw the latest HM Magazine (digital version, March 2012 Issue #164) which included a photo of As I Lay Dying on page 11 – without a photo credit. I laugh because I, too, am an editor in this industry and have done the same thing. Multiple times. So, no worries my brethren. My wife and I know who took that photo!
–Darren Tromblay, via email

*David Stagg – Now everyone does, Darren. We regret we did not include the credit.*

## FULL SUPPORT

Thank you for all your support through the years with Rivera Bomma and putting us on the cover for the March issue of Heaven's Metal. We appreciate it. All the best and God bless.
–Johnny Bomma and Rod Rivera, via email

## SECOND LIFE

I just got done reading your article in the newest issue of HM ("HM Breaks Up") and if I read it correctly, this is the last issue that you'll be contributing to? If that's the case, it's an honor to have my band (Mayfair) reviewed in your last issue. I think I've been reading the magazine since I was thirteen and I'm 23 now. I've always dreamed of being in a band that was featured in HM in some way and I've actually had two bands that have been in there. I respect you for stepping back in order to give more of yourself to your family. I don't know what it's like to have a wife and kids, myself, but I do understand from being in a band how easy it is to let your dream consume your life. I pray that you will find healing in your relationships with your wife and children.
–Jared Lacey, via email

It's been a pleasure serving with you and I look forward to continue doing so, just in a different capacity. I definitely want to see HM/Heaven's Metal continue on in success. You did the right thing by stepping down. Did I just say that? I will continue to pray for you and your family.
–Chris Beck, via email

I'm from Perth, Western Australia and I just read your article about wanting to sell the business. I hope you can sell it and save your family. (I'm not personally in a position to be able to buy the business from you.) I've enjoyed reading your articles on and off over the past 20-odd years and feel that it has probably been a fruitful ministry. Thank you for all of your hard work!
–Martin Creelman, via website

*DS – Without getting into too much of the business side of things, fans of HM will be happy to know the magazine is carrying on. The outpouring of support the magazine received after Doug detailed his trials in previous issues was overwhelming, and I can personally tell you that Doug was humbled. I was personally touched when Doug emailed me directly to let me know the news. As you could imagine, Doug hasn't had an easy go of it these past few months. (For more details on my story, please see the "Note from the CEO" on page five.) Although I'll be making decisions moving forward, rest assured Doug will still have a strong influence on the magazine. I respect Doug intensely, and I hope I can honor his legacy with another 28 years of HM.*

HM

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SCRIPTURE "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?" Matthew 6:25

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# BECAUSE YOU CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MANY SHIRTS

HMMAG.COM/STORE COMING IN MAY

I LOVE IT WHEN A LABEL SIGNS A BAND FROM OVERSEAS. WE HAVE HAD SOME GREAT BANDS, LIKE EXTOL FROM NORWAY, CEASEFIRE FROM AUSTRALIA, SAVING GRACE FROM NEW ZEALAND, AND NOW FROM FINLAND WE ARE GIFTED WITH NEW WATERS. WHEN I GOT THE EMAIL FROM BLOOD & INK THAT THEY SIGNED A BAND THAT SOUNDS LIKE CONVERGE, TRAP THEM AND ADVENT, I WAS A GIDDY LITTLE SCHOOL BOY. CHRISTIAN HARDCORE BANDS THESE DAYS DO NOT STRAY VERY FAR FROM THE FORMULA OF WHAT IS TRENDY AT THE MOMENT. NEW WATERS IS NOT ONE OF THOSE BANDS. THOUGH THERE ARE GREAT CULT FOLLOWINGS FOR BANDS LIKE CONVERGE AND TRAP THEM, ADVENT DID NOT GAIN POPULARITY UNTIL RIGHT BEFORE (AND AFTER) THEY BROKE UP. SO, BEING IN A CHRISTIAN BAND IN A COUNTRY WHERE IT IS NOT COOL TO BE A CHRISTIAN – LET ALONE A CHRISTIAN BAND – YOU WILL FIND IT HARD TO GAIN RESPECT. I HAD A CHANCE TO TALK TO THEIR GUITAR PLAYER OULA, AND ASKED HIM SOME QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW THIS UP-AND-COMING POWER HOUSE. ENJOY.

BY ROB SHAMELESS

**Please state your name and weapon of choice.**
Oula Maaranen. Guitar. Occasionally throat.

**For those of us Yankees that don't know the history of New Waters, tell them your epic tale.**
In the beginning, there were four guys who wanted to play raw and passionate music. I was fed up with my previous bands and wanted to make something I'd never done before. I guess this kind of music was something we all liked to play. After a while, we added Henri to play guitar and now there are five of us. We've been together for about three years. Made a demo (nowhere to be found these days), the EP, and an album is due this year.

**Being a band from Finland, why did you guys choose to write and speak lyrics in English and not Finnish?**
Finnish basically just slows you down when you're in a band. With English, we can be understood by people around the world, which suits our intentions better. We've always wanted to tour abroad and English makes it much easier to achieve. Maybe if we had more examples of great Finnish lyricists in heavy music things could be different.

**I have just started learning about the history of the Finnish punk and hardcore scene, bands like Lama, Ratsia, and Kollaa Kestää. What Finnish bands do you guys take your musical influence from, if any? How about some bands that our readers should know about?**
Those bands mean nothing to me. I guess most of those you mentioned are sort of pioneers in the Finnish "hardcore scene." Personally, Finnish hardcore is not my cup of tea. It's so difficult to say which bands have influenced our sound that I won't even try. But here's a list of Finnish bands at least some of us have listened to: Abduktio, Lighthouse Project, Endstand, Callisto, Disco Ensemble... They're not all purely hardcore bands, but they're the first things that popped to mind. Abduktio and Callisto have been the most significant influences from Finland to me personally. I think they both have achieved something truly original.

**As an American punk and hardcore metal fan, I can hear American bands like Converge, Trap Them, and Advent. Who else from the States would you say you guys take influence from?**
We get that a lot. Many people from the States name those influences and I can't argue with that. As so many others before me, I've listened to a lot of Converge. There are a lot of bands who try to sound exactly like Trap Them or Converge, but I don't think we're one of those bands. At least it's not my intention when I make the songs. I really dig these smaller bands from U.S. called Achilles and Braveyoung. I love David Eugene Edwards' work as well. At The Drive In rocked! European bands would be easier to name because it's hard to even remember all the good bands that come from the States.

**What is Christianity like in your community in Finland? In the States, Christian politics play a big part of the church. We fight for marriage to stay between a man and a woman, to keeping Christ in Christmas and Easter, to finding our identity in Christ. How open- or close-minded are Christians in your country? Do you try to make Christianity hip to the youth?**
That is a huge question. I'm a member of the Pentecostal church myself and I think there are a lot of good people there. I think there are all sorts of Christians in every country, so can't really say how open- or close-minded they are in Finland without knowing them. But I think there aren't many efforts to "make Christianity hip for the youth." I'm not sure if you mean that to be a bad or a good thing. I think Christ is the same to all of us, but naturally different methods should be used if you want the Gospel to reach different kinds of people. I think being a Christian makes it harder for people to fit in with society in Finland. The media is often criticizing Christian politicians and the Church and many people seem to dislike believers in general. We have this Lutheran state church in Finland, which creates the illusion of a Christian country, because most people are traditionally baptized at birth to be members of the Church. I think the problem is that people are "forced" to be "Christians."

**When I started going to shows, it was punk, hardcore, pop punk, metalcore, and indie bands all on one bill. These days, the shows are all one or two genres that fit the best together. What is it like in Finland?**
It seems to be like that everywhere. Of course, there are exceptions and we have played with bands from a wide variety of genres. But the metal/hardcore bands mainly stick together and so on. When it comes to festivals, I think things are better. As a band we don't usually try to get shows with only hardcore or metal bands. It's a lot of fun to play with bands you're not "supposed" to play with.

**Are there any plans for you guys to come across the big blue and play shows in the States?**
As I mentioned before, we've always wanted to be international. You can only play so many shows in Finland, if you know what I mean. I think the environment for our kind of band is enormously better in the States. Finnish clubs mostly want bands who sell a lot of tickets and play heavy metal. Touring the States is a long-time dream for me, but there are no plans for it at the moment. The biggest issue is, of course, the money. But I'm sure we'll get there someday. If someone at your end of the ocean wants to set up something, we're ready!

**What are you most looking forward to when you guys come play the States? The food, the view, the new friends, the flat tires, etc?**
Extra large things, mostly. And people who appreciate good music, too.

**Extra large pizzas, fries, burritos, drinks, women? All of the above?**
Pizzas, fries, sodas, buckets of dead animals, humans, buildings. Everything's bigger in the U.S. of A.

✖

# PYRIT

# FHION

BY COLLETTE WYCOFF

# THE PYRITHION IS A MYTHICAL EVIL CREATURE OF THE UNDERWORLD FROM A CARD GAME.

THE PYRITHION IS A MYTHICAL, EVIL CREATURE FROM A CARD GAME THAT TAKES PLACE IN THE UNDERWORLD. THE RED, SNAKE-LIKE CREATURE HAS SPIKES RUNNING ALONG HIS BACK, HEAD TO HIS TAIL, AND IS A MANIPULATOR. HE LOVES TO LIE AND INTIMIDATE. THIS CHARACTER IS THE PROGENITOR FOR THE NAME OF THE UPCOMING PROJECT **PYRITHION** WITH RYAN GILSAN (GUITAR, FROM ALLEGAEON), ANDY GODWIN (GUITAR, FORMERLY OF THE FAMINE, EMBODYMENT), AND TIM LAMBESIS (VOCALS, FROM AS I LAY DYING). THE BAND IS SET TO RELEASE A THREE-TRACK EP ENTITLED THE BURDEN OF SORROW AND THERE ARE NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT – THIS PROJECT IS DEATH METAL.

They have created a lyric video for one of the tracks, "The Invention of Hatred," available for your on YouTube if you'd like to look it up. Besides having propelled the lyric video beyond the primitive "bouncing ball following the words" concept, it is a quality effort by guys who really care about what kind of music will create their legacy. Lambesis said the EP is named *The Burden of Sorrow* because "regardless of a person's view of life, we all have the same burden of sorrow that we have to face, in spite of our beliefs."

One of the tracks you will have to wait until the album is released is entitled "Rest in the Arms of Paralyzed Beast." Such a title begs the question, "What does that mean?" "[T]he perspective of being carried through the universe," Lambesis says, "the naturalistic view a lot of people have is a very popular modern view that the universe is in charge. I liken that to resting in the arms of a paralyzed beast because it's a mindless view that we are carried through the universe by this mindless incredible substance, this huge vast universe that has no nothing and makes its own decisions."

The other track set for release on the EP strikes a more personal chord with Lambesis. "'Bleed Out' is about some of the more traumatic things that I've witnessed," Lambesis says, "specifically when I was visiting Ethiopia and seeing the situation the orphans were in. It's a way of processing that (experience), to see kids in need of such simple things is a sad experience to witness."

This project will take you beyond death metal. For instance, lyrically, Lambesis's perspective will be different. "When we are talking about Pyrithion," he says, "I think that one thing I haven't had a chance to explain is that the lyrical approach I have for this band is from different points of views. It is more like a philosophical approach to songwriting, where as As I Lay Dying was a more personal approach and thoughts that I directly had. Pyrithion goes off of concepts that I am pointing out that exist but that I don't necessarily agree with. It's more of a fantasy-based thing, but not like a dragon and warrior type of fantasy."

But will this band be a God-fearing effort by the guys? Will it be worship death metal? Lambesis explains: "With this particular (band), I wanted to take on a different point of view and then discuss the repercussions of that view. They are not entirely things that I agree with, but it's kind of like playing out the philosophical outcome and each of the songs approaches that from a different angle. I feel like I have my own beliefs that already in my existing music, so I'm trying to create a lot of questions, but I'm also trying to point out the questions that everybody is left with. I want kids to think a little deeper and to take the time to properly question because every belief leads to more questions. To ponder the world (presented) in a particular way, and to point out the questions that come along with that. To me this is a very dark and heavy EP with a certain sense of melody and structure that makes it digestible."

Pyrithion, as is apparent by my conversation with Lambesis, will go beyond musicality and aural function. After getting into these tracks, I'm sure the full-length (which is still being written) will be 10 of the most inspiring, thought-provoking songs of their collective careers. In the meantime, the EP should hold you over. It's a piece of metal art. Not because everyone in the band has built a respectable reputation in other bands or because there are few things I love more than "good metal save our Lord Jesus Christ," but because it is thoughtful, intricate, melodic, heavy, and features the kind of guitar work that satisfies. You'll want to get this EP because of what has been created in every beat and measure, not just because of who these guys are.

After the release of the full-length, expect to see Pyrithion take and own the stage. They anticipate that they will play shows with this line-up, but are waiting for the release of the album because of the need for more tracks in their sets. Also, if you noticed the line-up, maybe you're thinking that Pyrithion will be the next great three-man band. Another Police or Primus or Rush. Actually, there are only three people named in the band because they have limited the members to the guys who are doing the writing. They are not opposed to adding more members to the line-up in the future, but right now, they work as three.

✖

EST. 2010

# Killswitch Engage

# version 3.0

BY DOUG VAN PELT

Photo: Travis Shinn

The people that say, "History repeats itself," weren't exactly referring to the world of rock and roll when they made that oft-repeated observation, but it's exactly what has happened with Killswitch Engage. In fact, it wouldn't be too ridiculous to call KsE "the Van Halen of the New Wave of American Heavy Metal."

Much like their hard-rockin' counterparts separated by a few musical generations and genres, Killswitch finds its original singer back in the fold. Just like the Dave vs. Sammy debates that circle around the Van Halen camp, there'll now be the Jesse vs. Howard comparisons and camps of opinion.

No one would have guessed that Jesse Leach would return to the KsE camp – especially considering his public desire not to sing the Howard Jones material with the band when he filled in for Jones in 2010 during a leave of absence. When Howard announced his departure from the band last year, not many would have predicted Leach re-joining the fold – including the band, who didn't include him in the auditions. But there was one giant hint that the impossible was indeed possible – and that was the Point of Grace side-project that Jesse and guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz did together in 2011.

**Tell me the story about how the decision-making process came to be for you to rejoin Killswitch Engage, how you heard about what was going down in the band, the communication you had with the guys and then your decision to actually get in and tell the guys, "Hey, I want to audition..."**
I was aware of the inner workings of the band way prior to the announcing of Howard leaving or departing or whatever you want to call it. Basically, I was approached early on and asked to rejoin, but I turned (them) down initially, because I didn't think that I would be able to sing someone else's songs and actually feel what I was doing (and) be genuine about it. Then a couple of months went by and I read the press release where they were actually announced they were parting ways with Howard and holding auditions. I called Adam, who was a really good friend of mine, and said, "Oh, you guys are doing auditions? Crazy ... what do you think if I went and auditioned?" And he said, "If you changed your mind, definitely – come and audition – but we definitely want to make sure whoever we choose is the right person for the job and part of that is being able to sing Howard's songs." So, I spent about a week or so really, like, living inside Howard's lyrics and really reading and listening to these songs and I started to fall in love with them. And that's when I kind of knew I could do it, so I showed up to the audition. I was the last one to audition and I felt like I nailed it. I had a really good time and the next day they asked me to rejoin.

**Nice. I wanted to pick your brain a little bit about your reluctance to take on Howard's songs... Why do you think your brain was thinking that way? Because, you know, some people are singers by vocation. Like, if I'm a singer and I join a Journey tribute band or I join some band that's already in existence, I'm gonna come into that (situation) knowing that I'm going to sing somebody else's songs. How did that attitude get formed in you? Please explain your way around it a little bit more, if you could.**
I think, for me, just growing up in the hardcore punk rock scene ... sort of being the hardcore kid at heart, I've never done that before – never sang someone else's material. I've always done stuff that's from me, so it's genuine. Initially my thought was, "I can't do that – that's not my style – not something I'd be interested in doing." I guess you might want to call it "punk rock guilt," (which) is the term people use for it. I just didn't think it was gonna work. I just missed it without even really thinking about it, you know what I mean?

**Yeah.**
I think it all kind of hit me when I was working, 'cause I worked day jobs my whole life. For 20 years of doing music I've always come back to a job and I'm standing there behind the bar at my job, thinking to myself, "Okay, I can either give this a shot or I can continue living this life." And the thought of somebody else joining the band that wasn't me or Howard was so odd to me. And I was just like, "I should really at least allow myself the possibility – the thought of the possibility of me doing it." The moment I did that, within a few days I kind of just felt foolish that I hadn't even thought of entertaining that thought process, because of my upbringing musically and because of my state of mind. And now I can honestly say, "Singing some of his songs are some of my favourite songs to sing."

"I spent about a week or so really, like, living inside Howard's lyrics and really reading and listening to these songs and I started to fall in love with them. And that's when I kind of knew I could do it."

Photo: Travis Shinn

**I assume that you've probably seen some shows when Howard was in the band and you actually heard and saw him sing some of your songs from when you were in the band earlier. And how did that feel seeing and hearing him do that?**
To me my main focus when I actually did go see them perform was I was just glad that my songs were still being sung and people still cared all these years later. You know, it's definitely a different style. We both have very different styles, but I think he pulled it off well enough and hopefully I'll pull his songs off well enough.

**Yeah, that's got to be a good feeling when people want to hear your songs.**
Yeah, it's a cool situation – for sure.

**Let's talk about the new album and what it was like getting together with the guys and the collaboration effort.**
A good amount of the songs are really natural. They just came out and you didn't change alot when being put to the album. I think towards the end we were up against a deadline and the tour was approaching and the label wanted the record and we only had a few weeks left... So I ended up just staying at Adam's house – where we were recording the vocals in his home studio and living with him and writing the stuff on the spot. It's really interesting for me. I'm usually more prepared. I demo stuff and I'm pretty prepared for songs, but for three or four of these songs it was really spontaneous. Adam stepped in and helped me out alot.

One of the songs that comes to mind is "Beyond the Flames." I was just completely stumped on the what to do for the chorus and we were messing around with the song and we stopped working on it that night, 'cause I was getting mental blocked. We both got pretty buzzed off some beer and then Adam just began humming the chorus out of nowhere ... So I picked up my cell phone, ran over to him and said, "Dude, keep doing that – what are you doing – keep doing that." I recorded him jokingly humming a tune and that ended up being the chorus – like the scales in for the chorus – from one of his drunken ideas. It kind of became a fun little game we would play where we would record in the studio and then take a break at night and have some beers and have Adam and I listen and come up with these ideas. The last three or four songs on that record were conceived by taking a break, having some beers and listening to the songs again. I guess you'd call 'em drunken ideas that came to us.

**It's nice when you get a creative idea that comes unexpectedly like that...**

Yeah, I think it really makes the songs. Some of my favorite songs on the record are because of that.

**Why do you think chorus is so important? It's kind of an obvious question, but if you can run with that...**
Basically, the chorus has to say everything that the song is saying. It has to sum it all up and it has to be memorable. To me, that's a lot of pressure on myself – to come up with really clever stuff that you want to sing along with. Sometimes I find myself hitting a wall with it, you know? I have the basic idea, but the good thing about having a producer slash one of my best friends in Adam is he is so musically minded. He would say, basically, "I like what you're saying, but simplify it – make it easier to digest. It's a really smart thing to do, because you can do tons of stuff with a song – but if your chorus isn't good, the song's not good. So, it's really important. It carries the weight of the whole song.

**Take the temperature of the band, so to speak. Where do you think Killswitch Engage is at right now as far as longevity? Do you think this band has got more years in it? How's it feel as you look and hope to the future?**
The band feels like a brand new band. We've already done four tours and we've got a bunch more lined up and the energy is at an all-time high. I think the only thing we have to be careful with is burning ourselves out – especially since all of us are over 30. It's a matter of pacing ourselves. I know that the passion, the desire, is at an all-time high with all of us. We're really excited. Again, if we just pace ourselves and take the right steps, the right process, we'll last for another 10 or 15 years hopefully. Who knows what the future holds? You can only hope for that kind of stuff.

**Yeah, I'm sure for a moment there – with you as a friend and the guys in the band – it was probably pretty shaky for a while when Howard announced unexpectedly that he was bailing...**
Yeah, they werent too sure of their future – absolutely. We're talking maybe two years ago, and things were not really happening for them. It wasn't working out and I'm pretty sure those guys sort of had *that* thought in their heads that they weren't sure how long it was gonna last. It's pretty amazing to see them (even) just as friends, as an outsider, and now as an insider to see them – how happy they are to be back working again, to be on the road, to see a new energy in all of them. As a friend, it's really exciting and I'm really grateful to be a part of it.

**That's cool. I really like the Times of Grace project. I enjoyed that immensely. What does the future hold for that? Is it going to be a one-off thing, or is it going to be a side project or is it going to keep going?**
Probably more like a side project. Adam and I definitely want to keep it going and we've talked with the drummer, Dan, about doing an EP at least – here and there and just keeping it going, because we really love that band as well. It's just a matter of when we have time to do something with it, but there are definite plans to, at the very least, make an EP or two, maybe another full-length – depending on how much time we have.

I would love to record and even play shows here and there, but that's all to be seen. We'll see what the future holds for how busy Killswitch is.

**From your perspective, what do you see as the differences between the two – musically or artistically?**
I think Killswitch tends to be a little more, I guess... I hate to use this word, 'cause I hate it, but "mainstream" or "pop" – as far as writing goes – writing sort of, verse/chorus, verse/chorus/bridge-style songs. There's differences in the way the songs are written and they're also from a little more of an aggressive side, where I think Times of Grace can take a little bit more of an artistic nod and do stuff that's a little more diverse and maybe even a little more softer, I guess, if that's the word I want to use – not really (laughs), but... There's really more an artistic edge in Times of Grace versus Killswitch. That's probably the best way to describe it. I feel like with Times of Grace we have that artistic freedom to do an acoustic song or we have the artistic freedom to write a six-minute song that's really slow, melodic and strange-sounding. That's something we plan on doing in the future with Times of Grace – pushing those boundaries and doing more acoustic stuff doing more abstract music and I think that's the difference: Killswitch keeps it pretty cut and dry, pretty digestable for the masses. It's a career band. You want to be able to do well with it ... within the confines of your own creative outlet. In Times of Grace we're a little less concerned with all that and we're able to be a little more creative with it, without being concerned about album sales or any of that stuff.

**On the technical side – as far as details go – is Times of Grace signed to a record deal as well?**
Times of Grace got dropped from Roadrunner records. They don't want anything to do with us, so now we are free agents. We can do whatever we want, which is a good thing for that project.

**Nice. I know from talking to you before a few times in the past – and I've enjoyed our conversations – that your faith in Christ is pretty important to you and you've kind of found a way to kind of weld it with your art. How important was it for you in joining this band and what freedom do you have there? And what are your thoughts on kind of the marriage between faith and art in your mind with Killswitch?**
Yeah, I think generally it's everpresent – just 'cause it's who I am. I think, with this record especially, it's there, but it's not as obvious as I think, say, Times of Grace (is), for example. I feel like I was writing a different record, and a different mindset. There's a little bit more of a political/social thing going on in this record, but it's everpresent. It's something that I can't ... that's a part of me, so if I'm writing something that's a part of it, regardless. It may seem a little more obvious in some styles, some songs or some bands. And in this record it's evident, but not quite as obvious, i think, as in Times of Grace stuff. And also there's a whole new level as a writer for me where I actually wrote a song sort of questioning and almost, I guess, pointing a finger at organized religion and some of the hypocrisy within it. It's the first time I've written a song that's sort of a constructive criticism of my own faith or religion in general, I would say. There's a bit of a departure, as far as my thought process, but my faith hasn't changed at all. I just think I wrote with a different pen for this record.

**I think sometimes when you're an insider, your experience**

Photo: Travis Shinn

**gives you the right or the authority to offer some constructive criticism, because you're not an outsider that's just throwing flaming darts at it. You've got some personal experience and kind of a stake in the matter, so the criticism has some validity to it.**
I think if you love something you're passionate about, you have to protect it. You have to criticize people who are being frivolous with it or sort of contradicting themselves. And I think that a lot of that, you know, my father was a minister ... I have been in organized religion my whole life and I see definite contradictions that anger me to the point where people group me in with people who say stuff like, "God hates fags," and who are pointing the finger at people and judging them – when I firmly believe that we're not supposed to judge, we are supposed to show love. I think for me it's a righteous anger against people who are spouting that and, even if you do believe that homosexuality is a sin, for example, or whatever the case may be, you have no right to shove your finger in someone's face and judge them and condescend to them. That kind of stuff has built up over the years and really angered me, because there is a way to show people what you believe and I believe that compassion and love speak so much louder than judging somebody and hating them. So, that's kind of where that comes from. That particular song that i'm referring to is called, "You Don't Bleed for Me" and it also talks about the government and how corrupt we are – not just in the United States, but the world over – and the corporate greed that goes along with it. So, it's kind of a mixed bag with that song. You're right, as far as religion goes, there are plenty of artists that are criticizing it. They have no idea what they're talking about and that also upsets me, too, because my whole life I've been put under the magnifying glass with people (who) have cast judgements on me – whether I'm Christian or not Christian. So, I just kind of took all that frustration and wrote about it and put it into one song. I'm pretty proud about it. I think I did a well enough job with it. Different people from different walks of life can relate to it.

**Yeah, I'd go as far as to say – depending upon your viewpoint if homosexuality practice is a sin or not, that, regardless of that – I think God loves fags, so I think those people are ridiculous.**
Yeah, He loves everybody.

**Yeah...**
...And the thing is, too, if you want to point the finger at someone and say they're a sinner for this ... but guess what? You're just as much of a sinner. If you really read the Scriptures and pay attention to what is being said, you are just as much of a sinner as the next person, so who are you to point the finger? You know, point the finger right back at yourself. You don't believe that's righteous? Okay, fine – but half the thoughts you have during the day on a regular basis are just as bad a sin. We all live in sin. It's just about forgiveness. Forgiveness is for everybody – as long as you believe. So, who is anyone to stand and say this person is wrong? Guess what? You're just as wrong. That's what Christianity is all about – we're all miserable sinners. God's grace contains us, we're not worthy, nobody's worthy of it.

**Yeah, that's good stuff. You're familiar with the fact that there is a whole industry or a scene or sub-genre called "Christian music, Christian rock" or "Christian metal" and Adams' produced a bunch of Christian bands?**
Oh, yeah!

**Killswitch has never been known or claimed to be part of that scene or a band with that agenda, per-say, that are art is going to reflect faith in Christ, but isn't it kind of ironic that the singers that have been in the band have had a faith in Christ?**
Well, that's interesting, because Killswitch is a very much mixed bag. We equally say that half of the members are definitely not even spiritually-minded – never mind believing in a Christian God. So, it would be very inaccurate – especially since, if we were to come out and say this is a Christian band: number one, we would be put under the microscope from the elitest Christians, who would definitely not be happy with the stage banter that Adam D. puts out there – number one; Number two, they would analyze every little thing we do and I'm not in any way, shape or form trying to get into any kind of a contest with another Christian about who's more Christian. The fact that I enjoy a good glass of scotch, the fact that occasionally a swear word slips out of my mouth – little things like that. I don't want any part of that. I don't want someone telling me I'm not righteous enough to be a Christian. Also, I think, definitely again, with Adam's stage banter we would offend so many people if we said we were a Christian band, 'cause this isn't a Christian band. We just happen to have a few guys who believe. It's one of those things where you can dedicate your life to God or you can be who you are in your vocation. It's like someone who works at a bar – they're a bartender, but they happen to be a Christian. It doesn't mean you're not going to serve alcohol. I think that we're called – in whatever we're called to do – we just do it the best that we can and I'm in a band where I can't come out and be like that and use God's Name, because it doesnt work. If I wanted to do that, I would have to start my own band up and, honestly, I don't want to do that, but that's between me and God. I don't want to involve everyone in the world and all the press into my personal life, so they can judge me. That's just where I'm at right now. It's just one of those things, too, that, as you grow, your knowledge and your faith grows ... and I'm still growing. I may have a different opinion in a few years, I don't know, but right now I'm pretty happy with life. Such a complicated thing, you know, being a Christian artist and being in the secular world...

**Yep, there's a lot of conflicts involved – like the fact that, as humans, we question things and some people think that a Christian has all the answers and has no questions and that is kind of crazy.**
It is, man! To quote a comedian – Steve Harvey... He's got a quote that I love. I use it a lot. I'll word it differently, but he basically says to fellow Christian people, "Don't trip, He ain't through with me yet,"

"...My father was a minister ... I have been in organized religion my whole life and I see definite contradictions that anger me to the point where (I get grouped in) with people who say stuff like, "God hates fags," and who are pointing the finger at people and judging them – when I firmly believe that we're not supposed to judge, we are supposed to show love."

"I act as if people are watching me all the time and I strive to live righteously. You know what? I'm human. I screw up, too. I've gotten drunk a few times and I know people saw it; but, you know, I'm a human, but it happens."

Photo: Jason Zucco

and that's how I feel about my faith. I'm different than I was even three years ago with my beliefs. It changes, because I *do* question. You know, what I do (question), I search it out. It's not like I'm just sort of in an abyss and like I'm not sure what I think. I'm actively looking at every side of it. And, you know, I've looked to other religions, I've talked with other people from other walks of life. I think that's important, because if you really believe something, you need to figure out why you believe it. Seek it out, you know? And my journey – it begins every day when I wake up.

**That's cool. It's also kind of cool that you have a band – that you have friendships with people – that give you the freedom to believe what you want to. It's almost like a micro-chasm. This will be a weird parallel, it's like America. Killswitch Engage is like America – where you've got the freedom to be who you want to be. Even though the idea of an evangelical Christian – somebody who believes in Jesus – sometimes just that label has so much baggage with it that people see that label and say, "I don't want to have anything to do with that," like, "I don't want him working in my business or being in my band." But you've got friends who give you the liberty to do that – and thats kind of cool.**
Yeah, you know, that's quite interesting, too, from being out on the road and rubbing elbows with some of these people who call themselves Christians. You'd be really surprised at what goes on behind the scenes. There are bands – and I will never name names, but – I've seen some really foul stuff and that's why, if you're so vocal about your belief, you better walk the walk. For me, I'm not extremely vocal about it. I like to let my music speak for me, and my actions to speak for me. I think that's so important. I've met musicians and I'm just, like, totally crest fallen... Like, "Wow! I thought you were this way and you're not at all..." I think actions speak louder than words when it comes to your faith, as well.

**Yep, big-time. I mean, you have to question the substance of it if the actions aren't there to mirror something.**
Absolutely – and the same goes for our ministers. Same thing goes for those who are our quote-un-quote "politicians" and all that stuff. If you're claiming to be something, then be it. You don't have to say it from the rooftops and then not live it. That's something that bothers me really bad. That's why I almost tend to keep a tight lip about it and not allow what I believe and what i'm doing – the spiritual works – in my music. So, when I'm on stage I'm doing the best I can to reflect that; and when I come off stage, the person you meet is the same person who wrote those lyrics, so if I was acting different... You never know who's watching you. You think you can get away with stuff, but you never know who's watching and that's the way I look at it. I act as if people are watching me all the time and I strive to live righteously. You know what? I'm human. I screw up, too. I've gotten drunk a few times and I know people saw it; but, you know, I'm a human, but it happens.

**Yeah, if I can, I'm kind of on a soapbox now by saying this, but I think Christianity is so powerful. For example, a concept like forgiveness – if it's really part of your life, when somebody jacks you up you're gonna exhibit forgiveness for that person. That's where the rubber meets the road and thats an incredibly powerful and profound thing when you see somebody that gets taken advantage of and they respond with forgiveness. That's huge and that speaks volumes – way more than words, you know?**
Absolutely – and that's strength, but people don't see that as strength, but that's strength. That's why I wrote about that song "Living Love" in Times of Grace. One of the lyrics is, "Don't mistake my kindness and compassion for weakness." And on the new Killswitch record there's a song called "All we have," and the chorus is, "Forgiveness is all we have." At the end of the day, forgiveness is so powerful, it goes right along with love. It's the same thing. It's the most powerful thing we have and when you display that and you're genuine about it, that is a powerful message within itself.

**Absolutely. Well, wrapping up on some details ... What does 2013 and part of next year look like for you guys? What tours are you going on? What are you looking for and what else do you want to share with our readers?**
Busy, busy! I leave in about a week-and-a-half for Europe. We're doing a full headlining run in Europe and the UK, then home for a few weeks and then back out to do a full U.S. tour, which I believe they're going to be announcing in a few days, I hope. It's going to be a heavy-hitter. It's going to be a great tour with really good names on it – small clubs that will be really unique. Then we're back over to Europe in August for the festivals and then, if all goes well, looks like we'll be doing a show in Japan, Thailand, and The Phillippines. There's offers coming in from other countries, as well. I think the next year-and-a-half/two years probably will be a full world tour at this point – with what we're thinking the way things are going.

**Nice, I'm jealous.**
Pretty crazy.

**Yeah, that sounds awesome, dude!**
And then, you know, for the readers, I have an overwhelming sense of gratitude for just supporting me no matter what I've done and welcoming me back to Killswitch. It's a pretty overwhelming experience, which has changed my life and it's blessed me and my family, so we've been having a really good year so far. Hopefully that continues, but I have the fans to thank for that.

✖

A NEW...

# Album reviews

## KILLSWITCH ENGAGE
### *DISARM THE DESCENT*

*Twenty-twelve was a year of "hell-freezing-over-not-going-to-happen" band moments. One of those moments was Jesse Leach, original singer of Killswitch Engage, back behind the mic and the holder of the pen. Disarm The Descent is his first record back since Killswitch Engage's breakthrough album Alive or Just Breathing. (This is the band's first record in five years.) As much as I loved now-previous singer Howard Jones on vocals, Leach is the true voice in the band.*

His lyrics are the most honest and real. Killswitch Engage has band members that are believers, and Leach's lyrics are very faith-based and they're on full display in *Disarm* and *Alive or Just Breathing*. That title alone screams biblical meaning behind it. *Disarm The Descent* is just the same. Lyrically, Jesse talks about the struggle of life: "Releasing our inhibitions and answering the call." Musically, *Disarm* has something for everyone: hardcore breakdowns, trash hardcore crossover riffage, metalhead solos, brutal and beautiful vocals – and that's all on one track.

The record actually has more underground music elements than popular ones. It has the feeling that they are having fun with the band again – another honeymoon, if you will. They are writing music that inspires them and you can see it in the music video for "In Due Time." The guys are smiling and having a good time, enjoying making music and being in each others' company. (It does help that Leach and guitarist/producer Adam Dutkiewitcz got back in bed together to create a new musical endeavor under the band name Times of Grace.) *The Hymn of a Broken Man*, Times of Grace's release, is more of a radio metal record, a stark contrast to Killswitch's most recent *Disarm The Descent*. *Disarm* adds more pioneering metal, hardcore, thrash, and punk elements to the record. If you are a long-time Killswitch fan, you will love this record. It's something new that doesn't follow the formula of the music out there now. Get this record and jam hard. ~~[ROADRUNNER] ROB SHAMELESS~~

HM
IS COMING
PHOTO BY BASCHT

## THE ALMOST

FEAR INSIDE OUR BONES

Now that The Almost delivers its third album (its second full-length after the *Southern Weather* debut album, which was a pleasant sonic surprise and the *Monster Monster EP*), the outfit can no longer sneak up on anyone as a surprise from the former drummer of Underoath turned microphone-gripping and sometimes guitar-wielding frontman. Aaron Gillespie has surrounded himself with competent musicians in drummer Joe Musten, guitarists Jay Vilardi and Dusty Redmon, and bassist Jon Thompson. They all holed up in Nashville's Omni Studios with producer Marshall Altman and hashed out the entire thing in a live setting. The process translates into an energetic album. Take the song "I'm Down," which charges along like a Southern rock jam session picking up steam, with blistering slide guitar, claps and thundering drums. "You can't count me out," Gillespie cries like a desperate man that means it. "So What" is another good representation of the sort of "feed off this drumbeat and let's see what goes from there" impromptu jam/creative method. "Ghost" kicks off the album with a Foo Fighters slugging rhythm that builds into a crashing declaration that, "you can't touch my ghost inside." The live approach puts its heavy imprint on tunes that would otherwise be bratty pop songs – like "Never Be Like You" – and this is a good thing, because a new energy emerges that feels more like passion than pretense. But it's not all grit and tough guy rock, though, because Gillespie and Co. have consistently shown its audience that they know how to craft and present a hook. Anthemic tunes like "Come On" have that big party rock chorus that'll get hands wavin' up in the air like they just don't care and it would certainly make a good top-down driving song for the summer. Their cover of the Andrew Gold '70s hit "Lonely Boy" takes that same care with a great melody and story, adding their own spin to a classic (much like their well-crafted release of "Free Fallin'" on the *Punk Goes Classic Rock* compilation on Fearless a few years ago). The Almost might've committed a scene faux pas by rocking out so hard in such a straight-forward way, but if the audience will listen, the energy invoked on these 11 tracks has a great chance of strengthening their fanbase. [TOOTH & NAIL] DOUG VAN PELT

## ACE AUGUSTINE

THE SICK AND SUFFERING

In an oversaturated genre such as metalcore, bands must do something in order to stand out amongst the crowd if they want to get noticed and develop a strong following. While *The Sick and Suffering*, Ace Augustine's sophomore full-length record but first on Red Cord Records, has a very clean sound and is well produced, unfortunately it doesn't rise above the crowd. One of the issues is that Ace Augustine is stuck trying to serve two masters. There are times when the hardcore side of the band just gets going, only to be interrupted by the melodic singing. That's fine, but on this record it seems out of place. I know the goal is to be dynamic and varied with the songs and structure, but it comes across as too much of an identity crisis. Ace Augustine has recently undergone a substantial lineup change with the members of its band, so it makes sense that they haven't quite figured out their best sound. However, for a sophomore album and new lineup, this is a very good place to start. [FAIR TRADE] BARRY STAGG

### Ratings

| | Writer |
|---|---|
| Killswitch Engage *Disarm the Descent* | 04* |
| Ace Augustine *The Sick and Suffering* | 03 |
| The Almost *Fear Inside Our Bones* | 03* |
| Bill Mallonee *Amber Waves* | 04 |
| Valaska *Natural Habitat* | 02* |

### Rating system

**05** *CLASSIC*
**04** *FABULOUS*
**03** *SOLID*
**02** *SUSPECT*
**01** *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

# INDIE

## BILL MALLONEE

AMBER WAVES

Bill Mallonee has given new meaning to the word "prolific" in his long and storied career as a traveling troubadour, singer/songwriter, and all-around provocateur. When you put his work as the creative force and leader of the Athens, GA, band Vigilantes of Love with his fruitful solo career, he's made 50 LPs worth of tunes. (Many of his WPA recordings never made the journey to plastic and were only available as digital downloads. Still, 2011's *The Power & The Glory* and more so here on *Amber Waves*, Mallonee has captured the energy and creativity of his earliest, most celebrated albums in a way that his lo-fi digital collections could not. First, he's joined by drummer Kevin Heuer and bassist Jake Bradley (both did a stint in VoL), and, thanks to the support of his Kickstarter fans, they've recorded in a real studio allowing for a more artful texture throughout. Of course, like Bob Dylan and Neil Young, two to whom Mallonee is often compared, there's a certain repetitiveness across his lengthy catalog, but on *Amber Waves* – perhaps his best album in a decade – the guitars are more intricate and beautiful. The songs coalesce around the ideas of overcoming life's cruel fates and hardships through the power of Love, who "always gets the last word." It may well be that "Once Your Heart Gets Broken" and it "just keeps on breaking," you learn a few things worth passing on: "A six-string drag through an old tweed amp/healing spirits and breaking camp/and the high desert kiss of my girl/and God's face is peaking 'round the door/ in that high and lonesome tremolo/and in Louis Armstrong's 'What a Wonderful World.'" It's quite enough to make you look forward to the next 50 CDs. BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB

## VALASKA

NATURAL HABITAT

Valaska, the performing name for the solo effort of frontman Dave Valdez, brings a show-gazer indie effort for his first full-length release. It's instrument rich (think ukeleles, strings, flutes), which makes the effort hard to drop into a category, but it's easy to describe: bland. "On The Surface", the album's opening track, is bare bones and sounds like what a pop-core band would do when asked to record an acoustic version of one of their songs. Jump over to "In Voids" and, if it weren't for Valdez's tone, you'd think you were listening to a track Randy Newman wrote for the next Disney film. The problem with all of it is that it's just a little too ho-hum. It sways like you would if you were a buoy in the ocean, but if the wind never got over 10 mph. It's not enough salt and pepper, but it's certainly not unseasoned. It's Grant Wood's *American Gothic* incarnate. Some more spice would do the record well. DAVID STAGG

# The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

## Concerning "Jesus is My Girlfriend" Songs: Observations on the Imbalances of Today's Worship (Part the Tenth)

In this series we've seen that songs modeled on romantic, experiential and subjective musical expressions have dominated contemporary worship music. We've further seen that though such songs are a legitimate stream of Biblical worship expression, they have been historical and Biblical worship models (such as the Psalms or the Book of Revelation) held in balance with objective, doctrinal song content.

We then began to investigate how and why such an imbalance has occurred in arriving at such an experiential overemphasis. We began by seeing that the deep alienation between God and mankind engendered by the Fall leads men to see the world dualistically, as split between the "pure" spiritual realm and the flawed and imperfect physical world. This view is a result of the simultaneous and inescapable knowledge that men have rebelled against their Holy Creator while they attempt to suppress that inescapable knowledge (Romans 1: 18-32).

This split was institutionalized in Platonic thought, which hugely influenced monastic thought, which shaped to a certain extent the way the Medievals viewed Reality, which resulted in a Late Medieval and Renaissance perspective, which located emotion and instinct in a "religious" zone while reason and normative life were seen as belonging to the "secular" sphere.

Christian reactions to the rationalism of the Enlightenment (fused with Victorian and pietistic viewpoints) produced a feminized, experientially-fixated Evangelicalism. Its worship music institutionalized these attitudes for that branch of the Church.

This was all the easier because there is a legitimate strand of subjective and emotional aspects included in Biblical worship paradigms (for instance, in Psalms 51, 56, 3, 6, etc.).

Now, before we look at some of the other places in Holy Writ where balanced worship is demonstrated, it would be good for us to get a bit of the sense of why God would desire a balance in this area. We will quickly consider some implications of worship in the central Biblical and Creedal doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation of God in Christ.

As the Creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Definition of Chalcedon, and Athanasian Creeds are all sound summations of Scriptural teachings concerning the Nature and Works of God) tell us, the Triune God is both One (Unified in His Substance or Being) and Many (Diverse in His Three Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). He is not more One than He is Many, nor is He more Many than He is One. These Attributes of God, as a theologian would say, are Equally Ultimate: They are in Perfect Balance.

This is important for worship for several reasons. First, since mankind is made In His Image, we humans, individually and together, reflect the Aspects of God on a creaturely level. We are like God as creatures, created to reflect things about the One Whose Image we all bear.

So, secondly, we humans will only achieve our full destiny as humans by accurately reflecting God in what we are and in what we – which is why the Fall in Eden was such a big deal. It alienated God's Image-bearers from the One Whose Image they bear, necessitating the rescue, redemption, and re-orientation/sanctification of humanity by the Lord Jesus' Sacrifice of His Sinless Humanity to atone for our sin, restoring our relationship to God, and starting to sanctify/reorient His People so they could begin to image the Triune God Whose Image they carry more accurately.

Thus, thirdly, one of the things we are to image the Trinity in is worship, which is also an enactment in which we are to fellowship with the Triune God directly. This means that, as in everything we are to do, our worship should accurately reflect God's Fundamental Tri-Unity if we are going to correctly worship as revelatory images of God.

Our worship (like all the things we are, do, and make) should bear the imprint of God's Image (just as all the things He has made, especially mankind, communicate truth about Who God Is in His Essence, Attributes, and Persons, cf. Rom. 1:18-21). Therefore our worship is to be like Him in that it reflects What He is like as well. So, just as God is One/Unified (in His Essence) and simultaneously and equally Many/Diverse (in His Persons), so must our worship be. What does that mean?

Something like this: In His Unified Essence (His Oneness), the Lord's Viewpoint/Experience is also Unified, Common to the Persons of the Trinity. However, in His Diverse Personhood (His Three Differing Persons [remember that the Father begets the Son, the Son is Eternally Begotten, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, all Differing Functions in the Economy of the Triune God]), the Lord's Viewpoint/Experience differs necessarily in the Inner Personhood of Each of the Persons. Yet both the Unified and Diverse Perspectives are Equally Important. In a sense impossible for us to comprehend fully (to do so we would have to be God), the Unified/Shared Perspective of God represents what we men call Objectivity (the general or commonly perceived perspective on things), while the Diverse/Unique Perspectives of the Persons represent what we call Subjectivity (though how these fit together and co-exist in the Depths of God's Unified Multi-Personhood is a great Mystery to us).

The upshot of all this is that our worship is to reflect those eternal truths (especially since we ourselves are created in the Image of the God from Whom those truths flow). Thus, our worship should embody equally objectivity and subjectivity (just as we find revealed to us in the Bible's worship examples).

In worship, we are to laud God by speaking of, being grateful for, praying in recognition of, and singing about Who God Is and What He Has Done both objectively and subjectively. We worship Him for Who He Is (Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, Consummator, etc.) and for What He has done, both objectively (You have created; You sustain; You have acted savingly; You will come again, etc.) and subjectively (You have created me; You have sustained me; You have saved me; etc.).

To overemphasize any of these expressions (to focus on the objective confession of Who God is, or What He has done, or on the subjective confession of His having been or done the things for me [the current imbalance amongst us Evangelicals]) is to present in worship a distorted view of Who the Lord is and What He has done. It fostera a deformed view and experience of reality, and generally fails in our task of worship as Image-bearers of the Triune Lord. Let's not do that anymore.

Next time, we'll look at other aspects of the implications of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation for balanced Biblical worship.
Yet more fun and frolic in theology-ville.

[*kemperercrabb.net*]

# Guest editorial by Chad Johnson

## One Thousand Risks

For each of the last two years, I've sought Jesus on how he would stretch and grow me that year. The first year, I was drawn to read the Bible in its entirety. Last year, I micro-focused on individual verses, especially on memorizing and retaining them—where many of my blog posts would come from. For this year, I had no clear directive from the Lord, even on December 31st. The only thought stirring was that of attempting to pray for every sick or hurting person I come across— something I've considered many times as God weaves greater compassion and expectation in me.

I mentioned this risky "pray-for-them-all" idea to my wife and she immediately offered a profound suggestion. "Why not make a goal, like one thousand risks?" Hmm. One thousand risks. Daily risks, motivated purely by love, and bound not by days, months, or years—then follow them up with a short synopsis in blog form. Make known the awesome works of God, the awkward attempts along the way, and even the flat-out failures or rejections. Share it all, encouraging and equipping others along the way.

Jesus has been growing me towards stepping out of my comfort zone to pray for and encourage complete strangers, and for that to become a normal element of my Christian journey. Praying (and believing) for sick and hurting bodies to be restored, sharing Scripture verses as I learn them, giving encouraging and prophetic words, tipping generously, performing random acts of kindness, etc. I have also felt conviction to record more of the testimonies God delivers. Now more than ever, I see Jesus heal, encourage, and restore people, but have slacked on recording his kindness. Occasionally, I have blogged testimonies, but never have I considered doing so on a consistent, recurring basis.

Until now. You are hereby invited to join me on this journey. Follow along. Be encouraged by the hits and misses. And take your own risks. Onethousandrisks.com.

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# Guest Devotion with Paul Farrell

## Hope Hospital

A downtrodden 16-year old slumped in front of me with tear-weary, reddened eyes. Under a tent, his girlfriend of the same age huddled in a sorrow-filled circle of loved ones. A few days prior, she endured arduous labor and delivered a beautiful baby boy. As she caressed him the first time, the newborn was abruptly whisked away. In a nightmarish turn, anguish darkened the room when the baby took a last breath.

Barely old enough to drive, two high school sophomores faced one of life's most tumultuous hardships – the loss of a child. Instead of attending class, bumming with friends, or cheering at Friday night football, the devastated teens planned their baby's funeral using a casket the size of two shoe boxes. Barely past childhood, the young pair faced a brokenness many people five times their age cannot endure.

Slumped in front of me, the teenaged father hardly said a word. With tears still in his eyes he finally mustered a bit of courage and asked me point blank, "Will my son go to heaven?"

I silently asked God for wisdom and shared the story of King David and Bathsheba's first child. While the baby was ill, David, fasted, prayed, and wept wholeheartedly. Oddly, after the child passed away, David ceased mourning. David explained with hopeful anticipation, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23 NIV). I assured the young father his son was safely tucked in God's loving care and explained how he could see his son again through faith in Christ. He wiped tears from his eyes and whispered a thank you. With his newfound hope, we walked to the graveside and laid his baby boy to rest.

Hope.

Through Christ, hope opens doors of eternal possibility and germinates seeds of heavenly expectation. Hope equates to affirmation, assurance, confidence, optimism and trust. Promises emanated from God's heart are fulfilled by His hand. However, hope is assured only when tempered with God's wisdom and guidance. Humility and Kingdom priorities must vanquish pride and selfish ambition. More so, hope requires patience. When life storms rampage, hope is shelter for the spirit – sanctuary for the soul. Hurting hearts require hope's hospital.

On his *Life of David* disc, Mike Knott penned, "I think I need a place to go, I think I need to let you know, I think I need a hospital." What about you? Broken, hurting, lonely, depressed? Find someone to help. Let God know you need hope hospital. "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God" (Psalm 42:5, NIV).

# REUNION TOUR VOL. 15 – THE DEATH OF TOOTH AND NAIL

My mom was coming to the door in a matter of minutes. I had the ultimate prank on this summer day in Michigan, a time before formal schooling but not before my base resourceful instincts were apparent. I would stick my finger out the door (because pointed fingers look like guns) and make distinctive "Boom! Boom!" sounds. Before my mom could find the armed trap waiting for her, my finger was accidentally smashed and my nail was hanging off. I had used the wrong side of the door, where the hinges meet the frame. Dizzy at the site of blood, I went and lay in my bed and waited for my mom to get home.

I think it's a misnomer to think of "simpler times" as adolescence. Sure, I didn't have to think up Facebook statues or make rent payments, but I did to have to battle the faces in the grain of my bedroom's faux wood paneling before I could go to sleep for the night. And sure, there was simplicity in the fact that a ninja costume was as easy as stripping down to your underwear. (But not in the battle with ninjas. They know stealthy ninja moves.)

When I think of simplicity, I think of the comfort of those mainstays that anchored me through fearful times, especially transitional periods. When I left a small private middle school to enter public education, I was leaving my best friends behind for strangers while nearing the peak of teenage insecurity.

Every day after school I would get home, toss my book bag to the side like Thor thrusting his mighty hammer to earth, and I'd put on the *Tooth & Nail Anthology* DVD. It was every music video the label had released in its existence (1993-2000). Here, I stumbled into Seattle's mixtape. Into CGBGs on a Monday. I stumbled into some glorious underground of off-kilter and fuzzed-over indie rock treasure trove. I felt a part of something great, something secret, like Art Blakely or Prince's first two records — uncharted in both the Billboard and cartography sense. Sure, there were classic bands I loved (MxPx, Fanmail, the Huntingtons, Slick Shoes), the bands that made a dent outside of Christian markets, but the menus seemed to link to endless videos… Danielson? Dogwood? Velour 100? Ninety Pound Wuss?

Some of these bands I had seen tucked away in the niche crevices of the Family Christian Store "alternative" section — designated for all things outside of adult contemporary. I would slowly unravel each and every video (after kicking off each viewing with MxPx's best track "Doin' Time" in defiance to my education). Some videos were so abrasive it chafed the skin on my arms; other videos lost me in their sonic landscape of Big Muff stomping and spectral delay. I discovered some of my favorite artists, often outside of my straight melodic punk diet — the Dinosaur Jr. of Joe Christmas, the REM and Britpop marriage of Driver Eight, and the often hidden melodies of shoegazing Starflyer 59.

It seemed like Tooth & Nail could do no wrong — until 2003. Well, at least they got me through high school…

Everyone will have his or her own opinion on the matter. (Disney's Golden Age of Animation neglects *Sword in the Stone*, one of their best.) To me, the Tooth & Nail brand represented through those videos — and the overlooked quality of the music itself represented by the fact that any album pre-2003 could be purchased blind — represents the Golden Age of Tooth & Nail.

I had just struck gold with Anberlin's debut when I heard of two new signings and went to listen to them at the bookstore's demo station. (Yes, you could buy them blindly but CDs were $18 back then… you had to prioritize your purchases when you worked at Taco Bell for six dollars an hour.) The first was Holland. Holland was so unremarkable (other than its place as a nail in the proverbial coffin) that I had to look them up to reacquaint myself. The album was called *Photographs & Tidalwaves*. *Photographs & Tidalwaves*! The cover was a landscape. Their sound was so polished I had to brush my teeth to avoid cavities after listening. This was Tooth & Nail without teeth. They turned pop/rock into a dirty word. For trying a similar sound to *Again, For the First Time*-era Bleach, they were as far removed as the made-in-the-sweat garage band is from the white guy at the party playing "Wonderwall" to show his sensitive side and score a date. *Photographs & Tidalwaves*.

Then came Mae, a band whose reputation has certainly fared better, finding esteem in some toothless circles (and going on to some success, albeit I viewed them as a failed major-label Maroon 5 attempt). There was more sincerity in the delivery, sure, but not any more heart. It was another glossed over, synth-laden production with the nuance of a children's musical. This is music for your mother when Elton John has too much… swagger.

I stood in the bookstore, holding what I had previously thought was a sure purchase. With an album title like *Destination: Beautiful*… was I auditioning a rock band or a line of L'Oreal hair products? The landscape was traded in for a skyline but retained the same blue-toned aesthetic. Trading in the Golden Years for the blues…and there went my anchor.

Tooth & Nail recently had its back catalogue sold off to CCMG, or Capitol Christian Music Group (the news broke this March). I think we're over the whole major-label-equals-soulless-bad mentality, but there is something to be said about the once underground powerhouse, the once truly pioneering label paying its debt to EMI by handing over all of its past releases. In turn, they bought back their own stock. Tooth & Nail will restructure and continue as a (truly) independent label, retaining only its name and logo.

I worked with a youth group for a few years after college. In some ways it was amazing how different the problems kids face in the million-dollar neighborhood near the church are than my own upbringing in a lower tax bracket. It was equally amazing how similar basic anxiety, depression, and self-doubt were prevalent regardless of external securities or social status. I listened to one kid talk to me about his family life, his fear, and his failings. Before he left, I pulled out my copy of MxPx's *Life in General*. I don't think I said much, but handed him the album.

Answers are nice. Sometimes people just need the promise of mainstay, and while it's true that no music has ever rejected the listener, it's also true that no one person has ever stuck around for me like music. Tooth & Nail was once my favorite record label, and the music they released goes beyond its own perceived market value or sense of demographics or target marketing. Thanks for that.
—Matt Francis

# HEAVEN'S METAL

## Stryper

#98 SOLAMORS | ARMATH SARGON | DARRELL MANSFIELD | ABSOLON

**NOTE FROM THE FOUNDING (AND EX-) EDITOR** | DOUG VAN PELT

What's up Metalheads?

The past several months have been hell for me, but I rejoice in the present reality of a God named Immanuel. He is really with us in the dark times. I'm so grateful. Well, I've walked away from this Editor's job. When I made my announcement (with the March issue, which is available to read free online), the Heaven's Metal editorial staff didn't know what to think. Would there be an April issue? I didn't know, either, but I did know that I wasn't going to stretch out this exit like a lame farewell tour that never ends. I had to leave. But with David Stagg stepping in to take over, I was asked to help lay out an issue one last time. I'll be asked to write the occasional story or album review, but my days as Editor have finished. That's different. I'm excited about the changes ahead and seeing where the Heaven's Metal team and David Stagg take this thing. Help out and spread the word.

Grace and Peace,

Doug Van Pelt

## HEAVEN'S METAL FANZINE APRIL 2013 [#98]

# THE METALLIC TABLE OF ELEMENTS

**31 STRYPER** On the cover again? How many times is that now? When will that new full-length album be out?

**33 HEAVEN'S METAL CLASSIC COVER #26** Who said we never had Scaterd Few on the cover? And Stryper and Tourniquet (*Stop the Bleeding* album) as small insets ... for a Magdallan cover! What do you think of that much-heralded Magdallan release now? Is *End of the Age* a classic or not? Why?

**34 STRYPER** How do ya like their new re-record, *Second Coming*? Which tunes got the best treatment? How ya like the new tunes?

**40 SOLAMORS** How cool was Managing Editor Chris Gatto for running this story down for us? Plenty!

**46 ALBUM REVIEWS** A few of 'em.

**Heaven's Metal Editorial Team**:
Chris Beck, Keven Crothers, Chris Gatto, Mark Blair Glunt, Loyd Harp, Johannes Jonsson, Mike Larson, Jeff McCormack, Steve Rowe, Jonathan Swank, Doug Van Pelt, Todd Walker, Scott Waters

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Heaven's Metal
HERE'S JOHNNY
scaterd-few
MAGDALLAN
TOURNIQUET
STRYPER
ALSO:
REZ, RECON, SACRAMENT,
KERRY LIVGREN, & LARRY NORMAN

# COVERING THEMSELVES THIS TIME

STRYPER, ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL CHRISTIAN BANDS IN MUSIC HISTORY, IS STILL GOING STRONG AFTER 30 YEARS AND IS AS MUSICALLY RELEVANT AS EVER. THEIR LAST ALBUM *THE COVERING*, RELEASED IN 2011, FEATURED BLISTERING COVER TRACKS TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE MANY BANDS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED THEM THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. THIS YEAR, THEY ARE BACK WITH AN ALBUM COVERING THEIR OWN SONGS. RETURNING TO THE STUDIO TO RE-RECORD SOME OF THEIR BIGGEST HITS AND GREATEST SONGS USING ALL MODERN TECHNOLOGY, THEY HAVE INDEED BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO THEIR ALREADY AMAZING PAST. WE CAUGHT UP WITH VOCALIST AND CO-LEAD AXE-MAN MICHAEL SWEET TO DISCUSS THE NEW ALBUM, HIS FORTHCOMING BIOGRAPHY *HONESTLY* AND ITS ACCOMPANYING SOLO ALBUM, AND THE NEXT STRYPER ALBUM.

**Hey Michael, great to catch back up with you. We last spoke when I interviewed you after *The Covering* album came out.**
MS: Yes, I remember. Thanks, Jeff, for your continued support of the band. I really appreciate it.

**When we last spoke, *The Covering* was fairly new – since then, overall, what kind of feedback did that release generate for the band?**
The feedback was great. It's always a bit nerve-racking when covering other artists. We covered artists that greatly influenced us musically in our early years, so it was really important to us that we did justice to those songs that were so important to us as young budding musicians. Thankfully the feedback has been incredible. I'm really proud of that album.

**With *The Covering* album, you all paid homage to some of the amazing bands that were influential on your early years. Who do you find to be musically influential to you today? In other words, what are you listening to these days?**
Jeff, I'm afraid I don't listen to a lot of new music. What I listen to today is still a lot of the acts that influenced me in the early days. Truthfully, I don't have a lot of time to listen to new music. I spent some time in Nashville writing songs with some of the best in the business, so it's not as if I'm shut out to the "new music" world, it's really just that I don't have a lot of time to listen to new music. I'm either hanging out with my wife Lisa and my kids… or I'm working on my own music.

**The new recordings sound fantastic – great job. Curious though, why choose to re-record instead of just taking the original songs back to the studio for a complete remix/remaster to fix the issues – which would end with preserving the original feel more for the music purists?**
Thank you. We chose to re-record those songs in order to "right the wrongs," so to speak, from many years ago. It's not as if we don't like those original recordings, but in some cases we were teenagers when we originally wrote and recorded those.

BY JEFF MCCORMACK

YPER
ISAIAH 53:5

"...SOME OF THE DIFFICULTY IN LISTENING TO THOSE (SONGS) LIES IN THE FACT THAT WE'RE SIMPLY BETTER PLAYERS NOW. I HEAR PARTS FROM BACK THEN AND KNOW THAT WE PERFORM THEM MUCH BETTER NOW. I'M NOT SURE HOW ELSE TO DESCRIBE IT, BUT IT'S A LITTLE LIKE STRYPER, ONLY A GROWN-UP VERSION OF STRYPER..."

I've always felt they could be better sonically and musically. We've been playing some of those songs for almost 30 years. We have grown as people – and as musicians, of course. And there are some moments on those original recordings that honestly, for me, make them very difficult to listen to. A lot of it is small production stuff. Some of the difficulty in listening lies in the fact that we're simply better players now. I hear parts from back then and know that we perform them much better now. I'm not sure how else to describe it other than that it's a grown-up version of Stryper. I'm very proud of and blessed by what those early recordings did for us. But after 30 years of playing them live and improving upon those songs, we felt it was time to give those songs the performance they deserved.

**How did you all approach the song selection for which to re-record?**
It was a combination of choosing fan favorites and ones that we felt could be done better.

**With the production value of *Against the Law,* I can understand why no songs from it were included on the new release, but why were no tracks from *In God We Trust* included?**
It was really a matter of time. Only so many songs can fit on a CD before it has to become a double disc. So we focused on the early years and are hoping to do a "Volume 2" one day that will include songs from the later years, along with other songs from the earlier records.

**That is fantastic to hear. Shoot, I'd love if you re-recorded each album entirely, but I love the idea that a future release is being considered. Your biography is due to be out soon, and I understand it will have a new solo CD to accompany it. Did you approach the writing of those songs to in any way coincide with the biography content?**
No. Although the two will be released simultaneously, the content of one did not determine or influence the content of the other.

**I read one article about your book, and you said it contains all of the good and bad, even from the break-up period. Have the other guys in the band read the book, and how do they (or will they) feel about it? They're not going to turn around and write their own biography and their side of the story, like KISS seems to be doing, are they?**
The other guys have not read the book. It's in the editing stages now. I'm not sure if they will read it, and, if they do, how they will feel about it. I hope they like it. I've said from the early days of this band that we are four regular guys that God has used in amazing ways. Regular guys make mistakes. We're not perfect. And I've pointed out our shortcomings—mostly mine in this book. Some of these not-so-favorable memories might be tough for the guys to read, but it's all true. It's an honest account of my life. Will they write their own? I have no idea. Maybe. You'd have to ask them.

**When you sit down to write songs, do you approach writing solo songs any differently from writing songs for a Stryper release? If so, how so, and if not, what key factors do you think differentiates a Michael Sweet solo song from a Stryper song?**
There is a difference, but it's subtle. When I write for Stryper, I'm conscious of the Stryper sound, so to speak. I'm conscious of what the fans want. Writing for my own albums gives me an opportunity to expand and experiment a bit as an artist. For example, I have a country song on my new album. I cover a Neil Young song on my new album. I do some things with my solo albums that I probably would not do on a Stryper album.

**You mentioned in our last interview that you all had hoped to go into the studio and do a re-record as well as a new Stryper album simultaneously, to be released months apart. Were you able to do it, and/or what kind of time frame are we looking at before we see a brand new full Stryper release?**
We are working on the next Stryper album right now. It's all new songs and we will finish recording it this summer. I'm really excited about that and expect it will be out this year. I give a lot of regular updates on my twitter page (@michaelsweet). Follow me there – I usually release some samples during the process.

Be sure to check out Stryper's album *The Second Coming*, and be on the look out for Michael's biography *Honestly* to be released in the near future.

# Soldier

# LONG DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS

THE OLD ADAGE IS THAT LONG DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS NEVER LAST. HERE'S HOPING THAT WHEN YOU ADD SWEAT AND DEATH METAL GOODNESS TO THE MIX, THE "BREAK-UP CURSE" WILL BE LIFTED. THE NAME: SOLAMORS. THE MISSION: TAKE THREE VETERAN PLAYERS AND CRAFT A LEGENDARY SLAB OF PROGRESSIVE DEATH METAL FROM THE CONFINES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPUTERS AND DIY HOME STUDIOS USING CROWD FUNDING. ANTICIPATION IS HIGH BECAUSE THESE ARE NO ORDINARY MUSICIANS. JASON WISDOM WAS THE FRONT MAN AND VOCALIST FOR BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE (BTA) FROM THEIR BEGINNING THROUGH THE ALBUM *CELESTIAL MESSENGERS*. SOLAMORS MASTERMIND ALEX KENIS WAS A FOUNDER AND AXEMAN OF CRUTCH/ALETHEIAN AND ALSO PLAYED GUITAR FOR BECOMING THE ARCHETYPE ON THE *PHYSICS OF FIRE* ALBUM. TRAVIS TURNER PLAYED DRUMS ON *HOPE PREVAILS* AS CRUTCH AND ON *APOLUTROSIS* AS ALETHEIAN AS WELL. TRAVIS IS ALSO IN THE BAND UNTEACHERS WITH HIS COUSIN STEPHEN SARRO (FORMERLY OF TANTRUM OF THE MUSE) AS WELL AS A TON OF OTHER SMALLER PROJECTS. TRAVIS DESCRIBES UNTEACHERS AS "URGENT ORTHODOX NOISE ROCK – IF NEUROSIS AND PETER GABRIEL JAMMED ON RUSH SONGS." AS SOLAMORS STARTS MELTING THE FIBER OPTIC LINES BETWEEN PENNSYLVANIA AND GEORGIA, READ ALONG FOR MY FOUR-WAY CONVERSATION WITH THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES INVOLVED HERE.

BY CHRIS GATTO

**What have you been up to, Alex? I last saw you at either a Symphony X or Blind Guardian show in Philly, and I last saw Joel (Thorpe singer) at a Believer show. Other than that, it's been years since Aletheian was active, and even more since I booked Crutch for my first show as a promoter in 2002. I feel obliged to ask for our audience if Aletheian is quite done, or is there a chance the band may resurface someday? Whatever happened to the big break you guys had with the Metal Blade imprint?**
ALEX: Oh man, 2002...Aletheian is not really "done," but life caught up with us all individually and made it very difficult to carry on the way we had been. Ironclad Recordings came along just before things got crazy. They are great guys, and I feel bad that we couldn't take things to the next level with them, but we gave it a go. We had finally gotten a full time bass player, Andy High, and then temporarily hired on some talented friends of ours to fill in on guitar – Derek Corzine, Chris Keeney, and Travis Wagner – but we never quite got completely back in full swing. You'll hear from Aletheian in the future, it is just a matter of timing.

**And Jason, whom I met personally only once at a BTA show in Allentown and had a nice conversation with – finding that not only is he an incredible vocalist, but also an intelligent and real guy. Jason, many fans thought there could be no Becoming the Archetype without your distinctive vocals and bearded howl, and yet you did take your leave of the band and they did continue. Was that an easy decision to make? How does being on the road take a toll on an artist, and his/her relationships with band and family?**
JASON: Last question first – it is very taxing on artists and their families to be on the road. When we found out that my wife was pregnant, there was no question in my mind that I needed to lay aside the touring lifestyle to take care of my family. They really wanted to keep the band active on the road and I am glad that they have been able to do so. I love those guys, but I wasn't able to shake the desire to make music. When Alex approached me about crafting the lyrics/concept/vocals for this album, I jumped on the opportunity. The riffs that he sent me were so great that I couldn't pass it up. I told him, "I will see if I can come up with something," but within a week I had a 10 song concept album sketched out. Another four weeks down the road and I had already recorded four songs vocally. Needless to say, I was excited to be back in the game.

**Okay, so where do you guys plan on going with Solamors? Will it be merely a studio project? If the response is there, do you see yourselves pursuing it further?**
ALEX: The sky is the limit, but we are starting on the ground – music first and foremost. We are trying to create something different, but still familiar... something that has musical staying power and is not relegated by its sound to a particular era. That is the primary focus with anything else coming afterward. We all have grownup responsibilities, so we can't just pick up and leave like we could ten years ago. But really fan interest, funding, and life will dictate the path of the band in general.

JASON: Solamors is primarily a studio project. However, it would be foolish to say "merely." We would love to take this thing as far as it can go. That will depend a lot on the response we get from fans (which has been amazing so far). We really can't risk taking to the road and hoping it all works out at this time in our lives. We have all been through that, paid our dues, and learned our lessons. But that doesn't mean that we wouldn't love to play some shows or even a tour if the opportunity presents itself.

**Artists recording an album over long distance – not an entirely new concept. Crowd-funding, also, is not entirely new. But I've got to wonder if this is the way of the future. Record companies gypping artists. Consumers stealing music. Trending away from physical CDs to digital music. Greedy venues. Rising gas and tour costs. It's all changing the way a band has always worked. Is what you are doing now going to be the new norm for music?**
ALEX: Record companies are doing their best to stay afloat too, so I think that this is just another opportunity for bands to get grounded and work out their craft ahead of time in a way that was not possible even a few years ago. I think that both parties can benefit from crowd-funding. The bands can realize their vision by having more funding up front, and if the bands are looking for a label, the labels have more of an opportunity to see which bands have what it takes and what they can produce on their own. Also, tour costs are a huge issue for bands. Travel/lodging/living expenses make up a gigantic portion of their operating budgets, so bands are also using this as another method of offsetting those costs, which is a great boon for working musicians.

TRAVIS: It seems to be working so far. I feel that we have the fortunate circumstance of Becoming The Archetype's built-in audience, so that certainly has helped us.

JASON: I think that crowd-funding is definitely the way of the future. I wouldn't doubt that more and more big name artists who complete their contracts with labels will opt for crowd sourced independent releases in the future. Once that rock starts rolling, it will quickly gather a lot of moss. However, I think that bands will never cease touring. As album sales decrease, the only real way to make a living doing music full time is to play shows and sell merchandise.

**How do you see heavy metal changing in the time since you started listening to it? How about the fans? One thing I've noticed is that I consume so much more music now that it's hard to find stuff you truly love. And even with the bands I like, I don't know the music word for word like I did as a kid. Maybe we're all becoming a bit more ADD (laughs).**
ALEX: (laughs) Yeah, totally. In the Internet Age, trends and movements sweep through the entire globe like they never did before. That is a double-edged sword: It is good in the sense that just about anyone can have a voice in a way that was impossible before, but the downside is that finding anything in the sea of information is like drinking from a fire hose. And as always, whoever comes to the table with the most momentum/funding/connections will be the voice everyone hears, but at least I don't have to hunt down friends from overseas to get cool releases from the other side of the globe anymore... or pay ridiculous prices for imports.

TRAVIS: For me, as I age, the "scene" matters less and less. So I am more into music because of what it does for me personally rather than what it is affiliated with. There is still a scene, so there are bands trying to sound like other bands, and there always will be. Remember with the Internet, we now have access to everything all the time anytime we want it. Your band is going to have to find a way to shine through that.

JASON: "Heavy metal" is hardly even a term that people use anymore because there are so many sub-genres. That increase has brought on plenty of changes. There are also a lot more people who are interested in extreme forms of music than there were 15 years ago when I started doing this. I think that the market has simply become

oversaturated. That makes it really easy to find music but difficult to find great music that will leave an impact on your soul. The cost associated with starting a band has practically disappeared with the combination of digital recording and social media. I can still remember going out and paying $200 for the analog tape reel on which BTA recorded our first demo. Nowadays, you can record it, post it on Facebook, and voila! You have a band. To be fair, that is what we are doing with Solamors. The difference is that we have worked our butts off for decades to get where we are and are spending countless hours seeking to craft unique and intelligent art for people to enjoy.

**I like the video clips that you guys have posted showing different aspects of recording, like how to muffle the speakers in such a way to make a killer metal record, but not have the neighbors in your building call the cops on you! It almost makes for a reality show setting – not just the destination (a CD) is worthwhile, but the journey as well. Have people written to you, requesting to see this or that, or is the idea more like showing the investors where their cash is going? It looks like you are having fun making this.**

ALEX: Some people really like it, and we have gotten a great response from it. I tend to geek out on all that though, which can be a turn-off for some people, but at least it is there for folks that like it. I wanted this project to be as absolutely DIY as possible – even to the point of building most of the electronic gear – so we are trying to document as much as I can as an encouragement to bands that can often be discouraged by thinking that they don't have the means to put out a good recording. The tools are there now, and they are cheap. When I started this back in the mid 90's, there were no DAWs to speak of, and not many

Picture of Travis Turner photo licensed to Seth Werkheiser under creative commons "Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic" http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en

project studios. You were lucky to find an engineer that you could pay for some off-hours recording time and try to bang out the tracks in a weekend, live-mixed into a DAT machine, which usually turned out sub-par. Those days are long-gone.

TRAVIS: Yes they have. "DIY" usually means "do it how somebody else showed you how to do it... yourself." We are literally doing this OURSELVES. The best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your own arm.

**That also makes me wonder about the Kickstarter concept. You guys have drawing power based on the bands you've played with and the progressive death metal legacies you've laid already. So when fans hear you are involved in a new project, they want in. It's that simple and ingenious because it gives them a sense of belonging to what you are doing as well – like voting with your wallet. But what if you were a new band starting out? How would you "earn" enough fans to be able to make your debut?**

ALEX: Indeed, "voting with your wallet" is a phrase I use quite often actually. Really, Kickstarter is a good platform after you have done the hard work. There is no magical shortcut. Just make friends, be cool, hang out, work hard, play music. There tend to be "movements" who are, at their core, just groups of friends. There were a ton of great bands in Pennsylvania when Aletheian started out, and most of us came up together. Some bands like August Burns Red were part of our group of peers and have had fantastic commercial success through hard work, playing a ton of shows and becoming known as cool guys. Other bands developed an attitude and people didn't want to work with them. I have always placed emphasis on trying to be the first band there to help set up and the

*f information is like drinking from a fire hose..."*



last band to leave to help tear down. That type of thing goes a long way.

JASON: If we were a new band starting out (in the traditional sense), we would have no real choice but to hit the venues/clubs and try to establish a small fan base. From there, we would push our stuff online and try to get more people interested. Even then, people will be hesitant to pay for something for which they have no real expectations. Unless the social media bug gets people (like it has for many modern bands), the money would have to come out of our own pockets. That is basically what is happening with Solamors. We will not produce an industry quality album on $3,000-$5000 alone. It will take a lot more than that to do it justice. Much of it will come out of our own blood, sweat, and tears. Even so, we are hoping that fans of melodic, thinking man's metal will continue to show financial support and get us closer to what it really takes to make a historic and lasting metal masterpiece. Rest assured, that is what we are determined to do.

**Has it become easier or more accepted to share your Christian worldview as an artist in the heavy metal world?**
ALEX: Back to the Internet Age concept, it is easier to be heard but harder to be taken seriously. And the online attitudes foster a kind of group mentality that can work against you. Everyone looks at the extremist and the vocal, closed-minded few, and build that into a straw man that they try to use to force everyone from a particular belief system. So it is up to the individual to prove them wrong, and also to show them love, understanding, and an open-minded attitude.

JASON: I think it might seem that way because bands like For Today and Sleeping Giant are successful despite being very outspoken about their faith. However, I am not convinced that those bands are really gaining headway in the secular markets. I think there has simply been a growing fan base of youth group kids looking for the alternative to secular metal/hardcore that have latched on to them and made them wildly successful (especially in the case of For Today). In my observation, the general metal world is still very antagonistic to Christianity, and that makes sense. I say that it makes sense because I am also somewhat opposed to the idea of taking a form of music and trying to "baptize" it. That is why I would rather just focus on making the best possible art that we can and let the lyrics be what they are going to be coming from my particular worldview (which is fairly obvious, but not preachy). I think that makes the most sense regardless of whether you are a Christian or not. Unlike a lot of bands in the extreme music world, we simply aren't interested in making music to advance a particular cause. We are not activists; we are artists. We have a cause, and it is reflected in the artwork. Nevertheless, our primary goal is to engage people's minds and hearts with what I believe are our God-given abilities to be creative. I maintain that we are creating something that, regardless of its lyrical content, stands as a monument to the image of God in humanity.

**How can a band market itself now? Will cutting technology make touring obsolete, or is the concert experience a sacred cow of heavy metal culture?**
ALEX: You will never replace the raw feel, energy, and personal touch of live shows and touring. You really get a sense of the personality of a band during their shows. The online revolution is just another way to experience a band, and it also opens doors of expression for individuals that are not capable of touring. There are some fantastic bands out there that make great music and simply cannot commit to a tour. This new movement allows them to still make great music and interact in a more personal way with fans.

**What new or old music is influencing you guys now?**
ALEX: I am still inspired by the bands I have loved over the years: Cynic, Extol, Death, Believer, Spiral Architect, Davis Torn, Bowie, Dream Theater, NIN, Vai, Zappa, etc. I am a music lover and I own thousands of CDs, tapes, and records so I couldn't even begin to list them. They have all imprinted themselves on my brain in various ways and changed my life and the way I approach music. But really, I like iconoclasts and visionaries, out of the box thinkers, and people that pay homage to the past but move on from there and make something unique.

JASON: I still love listening to Extol. I hear that have a new album coming out, which is exciting. I also regularly listen to the first few records from Symphony X and Dream Theater.

**What do you want to tell the fans about Solamors?**
ALEX: Solamors is a musical experiment and an art piece through and through, from the writing to the methods of recording and the arranging to the artwork and lyrical content. We are trying to take familiar elements, give a flavor of that, and then take things into outer space a bit before coming back to familiarity. We are not trying to sell a zillion records, we just want to make something special and give people elements of what they are used to, side by side with things that will challenge their musical boundaries. The point is to be listenable but thought provoking. To not stay in a comfort zone for too long but without alienating the listener. I pretty much know that there will be elements that people will love and stuff that they will question, and that is right where I like to be.

JASON: As a vocalist, I am trying to break down barriers with this record. That doesn't mean I am doing anything that hasn't been done before. Even so, I feel like most melodic and progressive metal vocalists are predictable and monotonous. It is the music that is progressive but not the vocals. With this album, I am throwing that out the window. I am all over the map with different vocal styles—and not from song to song but even within each song. You will hear this album and ask, "How many vocalists are in this band?" But the answer will be, "Just one." With that said, it does not sound scatterbrained or unnatural. I think it fits very well. I am simply able to do things that I never had the time or freedom to do in BTA. I think people will absolutely love it. I know that I am excited about it.

We are selling through various third-parties for physical and digital distribution, all of whom have their own policies. That being the case, we will announce how to pre-order on our main website, as well as Facebook and Twitter once we get the specifics set up.

**Follow Solamars**
Solamors.com (Jason: Not up yet – it is a redirect to Facebook for the time being, but that will be remedied in the near future. This will be the main hub for news, merch, and links.)

**Social media:**
Facebook.com/SolamorsOfficial
(news, general media, and fan interaction)
Twitter.com/SolamorsBand
(news and fan interaction)
Youtube.com/user/SolamorsBand (video)
https://soundcloud.com/solamors (streaming audio)

HEAVENS METAL

# ALBUM REVIEWS

**ABSOLON**
DARKNESS RISING:
THE TALE OF DEREK
BLACKHEART
Absolon are an Orlando, FL, based melodic heavy metal band whose singer is Ken Pike, formerly of Malachia. *Darkness Rising: The Tale of Derek Blackheart* is Absolon's first album and is a concept album based on the story of Derek Blackheart, a kid who dreams of being a heavy metal guitar legend. The story goes that Blackheart sells his soul to the Dark Master to attain popularity and ultimately realizes much too late that it's nothing but emptiness and deceit. Ultimately, Blackheart takes his life in order to escape the Dark Master, only to discover that even in death there is no escape. As far as I can tell, the storyline is based on the classic *A Portrait of Dorian Gray* with a more modern approach. Musically, the band delivers an album that has a feel very close Queensryche's acclaimed *Operation: Mindcrime*. The songs are split between traditional heavy rockers with melodic hooks, ballads and some musical and storyline interludes. Songs like "Nail in the Head" and "Pretender" are striking and infectious in sound. There is a European power metal influence to both of these songs with the mix of heavy riffs and melodic keyboards. These more rocking songs are contrasted with ballads such as "Even Heros Fall." This particular ballad is mostly built around a clean guitar and piano and is a bit dark and purposely introspective. There are also a few instrumental interludes, including "The Master Calls" and "The Master Calls Reprise" – both of which are fairly heavy in approach, as well as the acoustic based "State Of Mind." Pike's vocals are clean and mostly in the mid-range, never really soaring into the highs that one might expect from a band of this nature. However, that's not to say that his vocals don't work well. In fact, I found the entire thing to be quite mesmerizing. The storyline, the music, the vocals and the production all work well together, making for a fantastic listen. [Independent] Scott Waters

**ARMATH SARGON**
UNDER THE MOON AND SUN
*Under the Moon and Sun* is beautifully packaged – whether you have the single-disc version, the double-disc, or the super-rare hand-crafted wooden box version that sold out immediately – you'll immediately notice the sepia toned mountain scenery and the woodgrain "framing." The whole nature theme really sets the tone for this black metal work, with passionate, uplifting lyrics that cry out to God much like the psalmists of old. Although many black metal outfits are one-man bands, they often suffer from similar song structures and instrumentation throughout an album, thus earning a review of "monotonous" by critics. This album steers clear of that label by showing diversity from song to song and Armath Sargon's hoarse growls add as much to the music as the forest-themed artwork. [Nokternal Hemizphear] Chris Gatto

**DARRELL MANSFIELD BAND**
REVELATION
(EXPANDED EDITION)
Although Glenn Kaiser might have more name recognition in the Christian blues genre, Darrell Mansfield is definitely a premiere bluesman – having honed his craft since the late '70s, playing with a who's who of musicians during that time. This record combines the original *Revelation* album from 1985 and the *Revelation Live* album from 1988 into one nice package. No remastering, no frills, and the re-release puts two out-of-print, vital albums back in your hands. *Revelation* finds Darrell Mansfield Band in bluesy hard rock territory similar to Rez, and Eric Turner's tasty guitar licks make it a must-hear event – even 25+ years later. Available at darrellmansfield.com. [Son] Chris Gatto

**BLACKHOUSE**
BEYOND THE GATES OF GOOD AND EVIL
Blackhouse is a very unique band. Though they have been putting out their brand of industrial noise since 1984, their name still remains largely unknown to the Christian market at large. Quite frankly, *Beyond the Gates of Good and Evil* was a real letdown for me. This band-issued CDR is called "an unusual collection of grooves, beats and unfinished songs" and it seems to be just that – snippets of electronic based beats or rhythms that were unused and unfinished. Some of them have potential, but not so much in their current state. For a good introduction to Blackhouse's music, I suggest seeking out their older material. [Ladd-Frith] Chris Gatto

**BLACKHOUSE**
THIRTY IN 30 (DVD)
This project from industrial noise band Blackhouse is an interesting premise – the artist decided to create a video each day for 30 days. It appears that they used songs from throughout their history. The term "video" should be taken loosely, though. It might be more appropriate to say that the audio art is accompanied by visual art in 30 separate instances. The overall effect is much like our local planetarium, which puts on light shows set to the classic albums of Pink Floyd. Some songs are collaborations with industrial artist Hypnoskull or rapper Craig G. In this band-issued package, the first CD will play a Blackhouse/ Hypnoskull video only on your computer, while the DVD-R is the above-mentioned 30-video project. [Ladd-Frith] Chris Gatto

## Rating system

**05** *CLASSIC*
**04** *FABULOUS*
**03** *SOLID*
**02** *SUSPECT*
**01** *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

*Surf this: absolonrocks.com, myspace.com/armathsargon*
*darrellmansfield.com, blackhouse.bandcamp.com, facebook.com/silencethesassembly*

**SILENCE THE ASSEMBLY**
VOYAGES
I wasn't sure what to expect from this up-and-coming band of local Virginia boys, but what I got was a pleasant surprise. They give (and I do mean give) us five songs of super-tight and very nicely produced hardcore with metallic tendencies. Comparing them to bands like August Burns Red, As I Lay Dying, This or the Apocalypse, and even a little For Today would not be too far off the mark, and they have already shared the stage with a large number of amazing, similar bands. With bass drum hits that come fast and furious like machine gun bullet blasts; tight, crunchy guitars; and a record filled with changes and breakdowns Silence the Assembly keep the songs from getting boring. Some may feel there is nothing new being offered here musically, but it's a top-notch release for an unsigned band's first LP. The band is still offering the record for free; visit their website for more information (facebook.com/silencetheassembly). [Independent] Jeff McCormack

## Ratings

| | Writer |
|---|---|
| Absolon *Release the Panic* | 04 |
| Armath Sargon *Release the Panic* | 03 |
| Darrell Mansfield Band *Release the Panic* | 04 |
| Blackhouse *Release the Panic* | 01 |
| Blackhouse *Release the Panic* | 02 |
| Silence The Assembly *Release the Panic* | 03* |

THIS LIFE THEREFORE IS NOT RIGHTEOUSNESS,
BUT GROWTH IN RIGHTEOUSNESS,
NOT HEALTH, BUT HEALING,
NOT BEING BUT BECOMING,
NOT REST BUT EXERCISE.
WE ARE NOT YET WHAT WE SHALL BE,
BUT WE ARE GROWING TOWARD IT,
THE PROCESS IS NOT YET FINISHED,
BUT IT IS GOING ON,
THIS IS NOT THE END,
BUT IT IS THE ROAD.
ALL DOES NOT YET GLEAM IN GLORY,
BUT ALL IS BEING PURIFIED.

MARTIN LUTHER